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AUTHOR Waters, Louise Bay
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ABSTRACT

This paper details the structure and process of preservice teacher training and new teacher induction at Melrose Elementary School in Oakland (California), an urban professional development school associated with the California State University at Hayward. In addition to providing an overview of the school, describing the school-university partnership, and discussing the intern program for new teachers, this paper also summarizes the lessons that have been learned and significant issues that have been raised. The program focuses on preparing teachers for teaching in a multiethnic, multilingual, inner-city environment. Success indicators include improved school climate and discipline, as well as academic growth among students. Although significant successes have been achieved, several problems have emerged related to the process of school restructuring and curricular change, the limits of the partnership's ability to have an impact on the university, and problems associated with teacher interns merging with the school faculty. (IAH)

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LESSONS LEARNED IN THE CREATION OF AN URBAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

Louise Bay Waters

In the exemplary traditional teacher training program, credential candidates are exposed to the best of current research and practice and placed in student teaching settings modeling these ideas. In other words, they are given the product of current educational reforms but seldom do they participate in the process of creating that reform. They emerge from such programs as practitioners rather than professionals, researchers, or change agents. In part the product rather than process orientation is the result of the typical student teaching placement which is short and classroom focused. It is unusual for student teachers to become an integral part of the professional life of the school community. Similarly, the lack of support and survivalism confronting most beginning teachers mitigates against their development of either the skills or orientation to become change agents.

The California State University, Hayward (CSUH) Urban Professional Development School Program, has explicitly sought to create a structure which builds an assumption of change and continuous improvement into the new teacher's view of the profession. Below I have detailed both the structure and process of teacher training and new teacher induction at one of the CSUH Urban Professional Development Schools, Melrose Elementary School in Oakland. I have then outlined four lessons learned in the creation of the program.

Melrose Urban Professional Development School

Overview

In 1988-89 Melrose Elementary School formed a partnership with CSUH to begin the creation of an Urban Professional Development School specifically oriented toward training teachers for multiethnic, multilingual, inner-city teaching. Melrose is located in a low-income section of Oakland serving a population that is 60% Latino, 30% African American, and 10% Southeast Asian. At that time discipline problems were numerous, suspensions high, absenteeism a major issue, and achievement indicators low. Aware of these problems, the faculty undertook a year-long self study, review of research, and program of visitations. At the end of the year they voted to:

*adopt a literacy/whole language focus;
*restructure the school into grade-level teams for planning, curriculum development and shared decision making;
*form a management team composed of grade-level leads to make all policy, planning, budgetary, and hiring decisions;
*design a site-based staff development program to support their

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changes;
*seek full-year credential program interns; and
*reserve induction slots to be filled by selected second-year interns (beginning teachers) for one year.

The decision to become an Urban Professional Development School set in motion a process of continuous self examination and improvement. Each year, therefore, the exact content of the professional development program, for both interns and permanent teachers, has changed. In the first year the change focus was heavily structural and environmental: safety, attendance, discipline, and the new shared decision-making structure. In addition, training in the writing process was begun. During the second year modifications were made in each of these areas plus a concentrated curricular change effort was undertaken in wider aspects of whole-language instruction, ESL, and the development of thematic units. Year three saw the refinement and increasing multiculturalization of the program in place plus beginning involvement with developmentally appropriate education and technology. During year three Melrose was identified as an Oakland Demonstration School and received significant funding for staff development and the purchase and integration of technology. Supported by this funding, technology and developmental education have become major foci of the school this year.

Success indicators seem to be following the same sequence as the changes. Results from the climate and discipline reforms are unequivocal. Suspensions have gone from 109 in 1988-89 to 3 in 1991-92. Over the same period of time attendance has improved 15% resulting in an additional $406,562 in ADA reimbursement to the District. Informal writing indicators show marked improvement in both the quantity and quality of student work with signs that standardized test scores are going up for students who have been at Melrose long enough to have experienced multiple years of the new program. Individualized reading assessments show growth, but again clear data from standardized group assessments are lacking.

As the Melrose program has changed, so too has the conception of what it means to be a professional development school. The model which has evolved, outlined below, stresses the process of professionalism--the professionalism we want to induct our new teachers into. As can be seen, this process is research based and involves teachers in action research; professional networking; and on-going, site-based staff development--all of which are coordinated through a shared-decision-making structure. Through this ongoing professional development process the following four questions are continually readdressed:

*Curriculum: How can we best promote student learning in a multicultural, multilingual setting?

*Parent-Community Involvement: How can we incorporate parent and community resources to maximize the educational experiences of our children?

How can we access parent and community resources to minimize the negative impact of adverse life circumstances?

*Climate: How can we provide the optimal learning/teaching environment for our multilingual, multicultural school community?

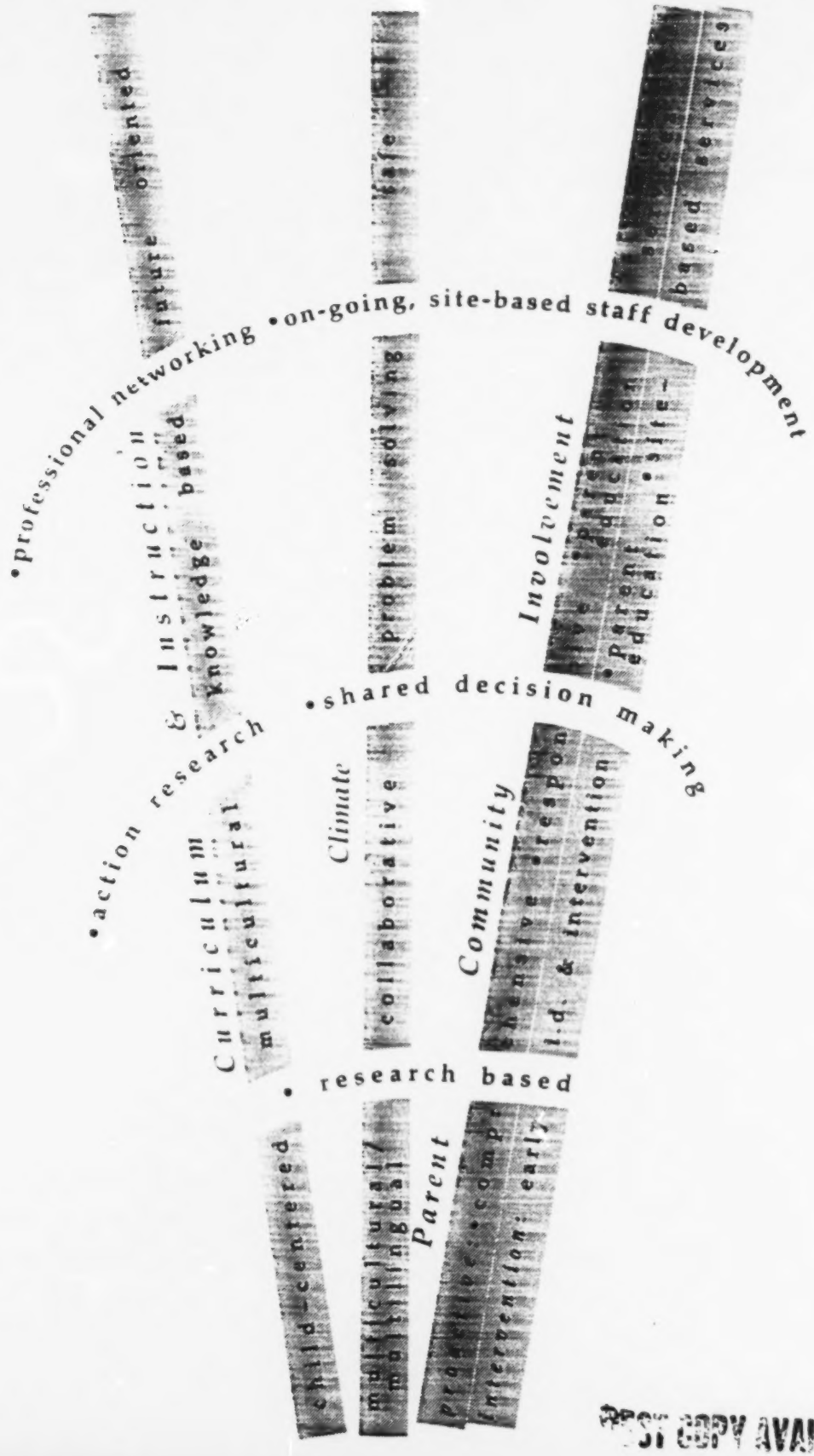
INSERT DIAGRAM

The Intern Program

The Urban Intern Program was designed to train new inner-city teachers for urban education as we would like it to be rather than as it frequently is. To this end teachers were to be placed in Urban Professional Development Schools that not only had strong programs but that, more importantly, were grappling with difficult issues in their pursuit of excellence. Interns at Melrose begin their program as credential candidates with summer courses. They officially join the Melrose faculty one and a half weeks before school starts by participating in the demonstration school extended-year staff development (this year in technology and conflict management). During the year they spend half the day team teaching with a master teacher in two different placements. In the afternoon they serve as technology aides in other classrooms and as paid tutors. The tutoring program, Highly Individualized Program in Reading (HIP in Reading) was designed by CSUH professor Dr. Valerie Helgren-Lempesis based on the work of Dr. Marie Clay in New Zealand (Clay, 19xx). HIP is an early intervention program targeted at second graders at risk for reading problems. Interns receive intensive training and work in one-on-one sessions with identified students for 10 to 20 weeks. They hold bi-weekly debriefing sessions to monitor student progress and their own instruction and observation skills. Two evenings a week, first year interns participate in CSUH credential courses. Tuition for these classes is paid through a Pacific Telesis grant to the CSUH Urban Teacher Academy. Currently there are 6 first-year interns, 1 second-year intern in a residence slot, and 2 former interns on the permanent faculty. 7 former interns have formed the core of the reform efforts at another nearby elementary school.

In addition to the activities specifically designed for them, such as tutoring, interns participate in the bi-weekly grade-level team meetings and the bi-weekly teacher-as-researcher groups. Along with other teachers, they develop their own action research projects and follow these through. In other words, they are full participants in the life of the school--from yard duty to staff development and from shared decision making to student-faculty softball games. They are responsible for helping monitor and implement the school-wide curricular expectations such as: writing and oral reading portfolios for every student; quarterly publications written, typed, and bound by each student; thematic units based upon a multicultural, multilingual core literature list designed by Melrose teachers; and daily PE including warm-ups and skill instruction, taught by classroom teachers. In other words,

Melrose Educational Development Process



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we attempt to expose interns to a vision of excellent urban education, a reform process to move toward that vision, strong instructional practices in line with the goals, and the kind of detailed planning and follow through necessary to realize the changes.

Although not part of the original conceptualization of the Urban Intern Program, interns have actually played a critical role in the Melrose restructuring effort. Through their team teaching and technology aide positions, interns provide small group instruction in 12 out of 17 classrooms a day. In addition they provide daily tutoring and the personnel to implement the intensive noontime yard-supervision program. Perhaps most importantly, they represent an internal substitute/personnel pool providing consistent, reliable substitutes for illness, planning, conferences and teaching positions that come open mid year.

The School University Partnership

The Urban Professional Development School Program at Melrose represents a partnership between the school and the California State University, Hayward. Support from CSUH has occurred in a number of areas. Since its inception in 1988-89, the Director of the program has served as the restructuring coach for Melrose. Her job has been to ask questions, trouble shoot, problem solve, locate relevant research and visitation sites, serve as a liaison with the University and other sources of expertise, identify funding opportunities, and provide internal evaluation. In addition, other CSUH faculty have conducted intern seminars, team taught ESL and Language Arts credential courses with Melrose faculty, and jump started staff development in the areas of technology and the HIP in Reading program. Through the Urban Intern Program, Melrose also participates in the CSUH Urban Teacher Academy, a teacher diversity recruitment program. The Urban Teacher Academy offers potential interns support and counseling prior to their credential year. To date over half of the interns at Melrose have been bilingual or members of ethnic minority groups. In short, the involvement of CSUH in the Melrose restructuring process has been extensive.

Lessons Learned

Whether viewed from the perspective of minority teacher recruitment, effective urban teacher training, or inner-city restructuring, the Urban Professional Development School/Urban Intern program has been clearly successful. However, in the creation of the program lessons have been learned and issues raised that are not easily resolved.

1. The intense involvement of interns in a single professional development school offers major benefits but also has significant drawbacks. The Melrose interns are involved with the school full time from a week before school starts to a week after it ends, including many Saturdays. As full time staff members they are able to participate in the planning, staff development, and all the

details of school change. This is a experience not generally available to student teachers. Program graduates have gone on to leadership roles in school change processes in other Oakland schools, which appears to validate our premise in the design of the program. However, by having students only experience one setting they are limited in their exposure--in the case of Melrose this means excellent modeling in language arts, ESL, and bilingual education but a much more limited introduction in the areas of math and science. In addition, because interns are essentially members of the faculty they are expected to "fit" with the accepted school culture. This limits the number of interns who are seen as acceptable and those who find the intense immersion comfortable -- and raises the issue of whether personality and fit are appropriate admissions criteria for a credential program.

2. Placing interns in a restructuring school helps train teachers as change agents but also places them in the middle of tensions inherent in change. School restructuring is a stressful, time consuming venture for teachers. At Melrose many teachers stay at school until 6 or 7 at night in meetings or, less frequently, in instructional preparation. This leaves little energy for mentoring new teachers on an individual basis. Thus the interns and residents at the school must be able to derive their support from the numerous grade-level and planning teams and seek out the assistance they need. Because collaborative planning and team teaching are the norm, the opportunities are there but the intern must reach out -- one aspect of the "fit" mentioned above.

In addition to the stress of time, change itself is stressful, particularly when it involves how best to address the numerous issues raised in inner-city communities. At Melrose there are philosophical and resources tensions between the need for primary language instruction for the Spanish and Cambodian speaking populations, the numerous educational needs of the African American students, and the need for bridges between the different ethnic groups. While these are generally well handled, divisions do occur within the faculty and the community and interns are sometimes caught in the middle. In addition, the resolution of problems may or may not be in the direction most favored by University representatives, but designation of a school as a professional development center implies support of school policies.

3. Despite potential differences in opinion or approach on an individual issue, it is easier for the University to impact the educational program at the school than for the school to serve as a catalyst for change at the University. Through the CSUH Urban Professional Development School Program, a number of faculty members of served as consultants for specific aspects of curricular or governance change at Melrose. The nature of university faculty positions, supervision, and the development of specialized areas of expertise makes it fairly easy for faculty to come in and take on defined tasks in a school change process. Tradition and status differentials reinforce the process, professors are supposed to provide expertise and can easily accommodate this within their

schedule. On the other hand, the lack of flexibility in teacher's schedules, job constraints which tie them to the site, and the low status frequently ascribed to teachers and teacher expertise by university faculty (and sometimes by teachers themselves) mitigates against teachers directly impacting university programs.

4. Designating a school as a professional development center for preservice and induction teachers is an effective recruitment, training and retention strategy but can slow down curricular change. On the one hand, having interns as team teachers and tutors in most Melrose classes has speeded the change process by providing extra instructional personnel and greater flexibility for the teachers. On the other hand, the continual infusion of beginning teachers (generally 6 preservice interns and 2-4 induction year teachers), has meant that to a certain degree curricular changes have had to be recapitulated each year. For instance, while most of the faculty is now well versed in the writing process and literature-based reading and is exploring the relationship of these to developmentally appropriate instruction,the new teachers are only learning the basics of teaching writing. Thus it is difficult to move the whole school ahead and to show the test score gains that would reflect a consistent school-wide application of the curricular changes.

Summary

The CSUH Urban Professional Development School/Urban Intern Program at Melrose Elementary School in Oakland has been highly successful whether measured in terms of minority/bilingual teacher recruitment and training or in terms of urban restructuring. Hard data as well as the subjective opinion of participants has shown that the concept of linking school change and the training of urban teachers as change agents is a valid one. However, achieving these results has not been easy. Difficult issues have arisen and have not yet been fully resolved. In attempting to maintain the success of the program and yet address some of these remaining problems, changes will likely be made in the structure of the internship experience. Ongoing efforts are also underway to more closely align the credential program with the curricular changes undertaken in the professional development schools so that field experience and course work are more reinforcing. We are confident that these refinements will extend the success of our partnership for change.